2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
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beards to seeing comparatively young men in positions of responsibility. In the meantime we held the fort and tried to build up a tradition of sober and gentlemanly conduct in the Council which would curb the impetuosity without breaking the spirit of the younger generation when in the fullness of time they joined us and replaced us.

As the leader of the Unofficial Members in the uneasy calm which had succeeded the Arab-Jewish riots in 1947, the line which I took then and continued to follow throughout my time on that side of the Council was that we were not in the usually accepted sense of the word an opposition. Although we were on the Unofficial side of Government we were jointly responsible with our official colleagues, for decisions taken in the Council which we had supported. It was not often that we raised our voice in opposition in the public meetings of the Council, because we preferred to reserve our criticism for the privacy of the Committee room, and sharp were some of the encounters which took place behind those closed doors. You may wonder why we should be unwilling to oppose Government openly in Council. The reason was that the temperament of people in the United Kingdom and the temperament of people in the Colonies is vastly different. In the United Kingdom very few people concern themselves unduly about the views of the Members of Parliament at Westminster, and verbal duels and quarrels in the Commons seldom, if ever, have the least effect upon public tranquillity. But Parliamentary Reports which are to be found on the minor and less important pages of only a few of the daily newspapers in this country often contain material which in a Colony, in the kindergarten stage of political development, would have a very unpleasant effect. In the Aden of ten years ago a really outspoken attack on the Government by the Unofficial Members would have had but one result; it would have undermined the authority of Government outside the Council Chamber, and in consequence there would have been a deterioration in security. At such a time this would have been serious. Government understood and respected our motives.

With the full approval of my Unofficial colleagues I summed

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up our attitude in the course of my Address to the Legislative Council in reply to the Governor's Address at the formal opening of the new Session in 1949. The Governor's Address comes on the first day of the new Session and by tradition the Senior Unofficial Member replies immediately after "Questions" on the second day. I had drafted and re-drafted my speech, and I tried to learn the beginning and the end by heart, but when eventually I found myself on my feet in the Legislative Council I cannot recall that ever before have I felt so frightened. I had often read in the reminiscences of important personages that when they made their maiden speech in the House of Commons they had wondered at first who it was that was speaking and whose was the strange voice that they were hearing. I had thought this a gross exaggeration, but when I started to speak myself on this occasion I realised the truth of the statement. My voice sounded most peculiar at first, but after a time I began to be really interested in what I was saying and ceased to be nervous, at least not panic stricken; and to be quite frank, towards the end of my maiden effort I was slightly pleased with the progress I was making, especially when I was, so to speak, on the last lap. On that occasion I used these words:

". . . On behalf of my colleagues I assure Your Excellency that we are proud to be associated with, rather I should say, to be a part of, the Government of this Colony and we will ever be ready to undertake any work for the benefit of the community which Your Excellency may decide to entrust to us. We realise our responsibilities and measures necessary for the security and well-being of the people of Aden will always have our support, for only by a united and strong Government can the peace and prosperity of the Colony be assured. . . ."

Two years later on a similar occasion I made the position plainer still when I said:

". . . Much that I say in my address reflects the views of all

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or the majority of my colleagues, not always, of course, for on occasion I find myself at variance with many of my friends on this side of the Council. These differences of opinion occur even when all the members of the minority party in an assembly such as this are of one political persuasion, but they are normally subordinated to the interests of the party and the opposition generally presents a united front. Here we are not all of the same political persuasion, nor are we an opposition; we are a definite part of the Government of the Colony and as such are responsible to the people of the Colony that we do our duty in furthering their legitimate aims and safeguarding their interests, while at the same time co-operating to the full with the Official Members in all measures which are to the benefit of the Colony as a whole, distasteful though they may be to some individuals. I know that our position is little understood outside this Council and that when the younger members of the public recall that we exist, which I am afraid is not often, they are inclined to look upon us as a collection of elderly gentlemen incapable of saying 'No', who, in return for an enhanced social prestige of rather doubtful value, collect together at the bidding of the Government and agree to everything. Very natural, even some Members of Government have been known from time to time to make the same mistake, but this conception is absolutely wrong and the sooner that is realised, the better. We have our duty to do and we do it however unpleasant it may be, and what is more, we do that duty in the appropriate place—in the privacy of our Committee Room where we can, on occasion, be very outspoken, possibly too outspoken.

"We are members of one family and it ill becomes family members to differ and bicker in public if it can be avoided. Such conduct more often than not only brings discredit on the parties to the dispute with a serious loss of family prestige. Settle your differences at home and face the world united should be our policy and it is one which might be adopted by many persons outside this Council with advantage."

Strange words for the leader of an "Opposition", but it was

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a strange place, and what may suit the British, whom no-one understands, does not *ipso facto* suit all the peoples of the Colonial territories.

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The Standing Finance Committee, to which I have referred, was composed then, as it is now, of all the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council and only two of the Official Members, the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary, the former presiding. Here was a very heavy Unofficial majority in a very vital place, for the Standing Finance Committee controlled Government spending and carried out annually a detailed examination of the Colony Budget, a task which every spring entailed hours and hours of work and long and often acrimonious meetings, which always ended with an increase in mutual esteem. The Government men were able officials and good fellows, and you could have travelled far and long before you came upon a body of Unofficials more public spirited and less self-seeking.

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Gradually we all became more articulate, more experienced and more responsible in our actions and in our words. Our main platform was the expansion of education, the provision of adequate housing for the mass of the population, the provision of a good new civil hospital, and lastly, steady political development. It is curious that in those early days of the Legislative Council no-one clamoured in the Council for elections or for self-government, and we did not adopt the usual "run before you can walk" attitude of minority parties and extremists in some other Colonial Legislatures. It was not because we were apathetic, but rather, I suppose, because being older men than is usual in such institutions we were more alive to our own and other people's limitations and realised that we must learn our job before we could ask for promotion. At the same time we realised also that what was in one way our strength, for it indicated experience, was also our weakness, for some of us were too set in our ways to welcome change in a rapidly changing world. The yeast of youth was needed to leaven the experience of age, and I am glad to say that we did realise that, and in 1950 on behalf of my colleagues I stressed this point when I said:

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"At the same time I feel it my duty to say that we realise that in the not too distant future an awakening sense of responsibility among the younger members of the community may justify Your Excellency's successor in making changes in the membership on the Unofficial side of the Council. If and when that time comes, I shall have occasion to refer to this later, we will be very willing and ready to do all that we can to co-operate. The honour of office has its undoubted attractions, just as it has its responsibilities, but those, and we trust that you will consider us among them, who really have the good and well-being of the people of the Colony at heart do not need the spur of public office to induce them to sacrifice their time and sometimes interests for the good of the community."

These may have been the words of one man, but it must be realised that they were the sentiments of all the Unofficial Members who had approved these words at a private meeting held in my office some days earlier. It was a broad enough hint for anyone, but little did I realise then that they were, in fact, addressed to myself and that it was I who was destined to be His Excellency's successor.

I am afraid that neither the Press nor the public were much interested in our work in the Council; there was nothing spectacular, it was not "news" and not even that section of the Press which was already beginning to write of self-government in a most uninstructed manner and to put forward the claims of Arabic to be recognised as an official language, took the trouble to be present at the Reporters' table during the ordinary meetings of the Council. This does not mean that editors and reporters were absent from the official opening ceremony of each new Session of the Council; this was our one gala day of the year when the Governor, in full uniform, complete with feathers in his hat, and wearing his Orders and Decorations, with guards of honour and salutes, formally opened the new Session and delivered "the gracious Address", after handing decorations to those whom His Majesty had been graciously pleased to honour. This was quite a different state